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BALTIMORE SUN
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IN THE
WORLD

NICARAGUA

Cutbacks said to cripple Pastora's rebel forces

The Central Intelligence Agency's drastic reduction in support for Eden Pastora Gomez, whose rebel movement has been fighting the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, has backfired, crippling the guerrillas on the country's southern front, *Newsweek* magazine reported yesterday.

The magazine said the CIA took the step after Mr. Pastora, known as "Commander Zero," went back on a pledge to unite his Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) organization with another rebel group, the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN).

Newsweek said that the CIA hoped that withdrawing support would force Mr. Pastora to change his mind and join with the FDN, but the move backfired, causing a string of military defeats.

"Pastora received a final humiliation last week when Costa Rican officials cut off his phone: Comandante Zero couldn't even pay his bill," the magazine said.

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WASHINGTON POST
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Fund Loss, Feuding Blamed Contras' South Front Stymied

By Edward Cody
Washington Post Foreign Service

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, Aug. 24 —The southern front of anti-Sandinista guerrillas is at a standstill because of bitter internal feuding and a drying up of U.S. funds, rebel leaders say.

Several thousand of the guerrillas known as *contras* have been left inside Nicaragua's hostile southern swamplands and forests with little ammunition or food, unable to do anything more than hide from Sandinista soldiers, according to rebels here. Rival leaders Eden Pastora and Alfonso Robelo are competing for their loyalty, meanwhile, with meager stocks of supplies.

As a result, the Popular Sandinista Army has been relieved of the guerrillas' year-long campaign of harassment and ambush in the difficult bogs north of the Costa Rican border and along the southern stretches of the Atlantic coast. This leaves the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, headquartered in Honduras and fighting in Nicaragua's northern mountains, as the only military challenge to the Sandinistas.

"Our troops are hungry," said Brooklyn Rivera, an ally of Pastora who leads the Misurasata group of Indian rebels. "They lack ammunition. They lack logistics. They are suffering horribly. Our ability to act has been reduced to almost nothing."

Pastora, who became famous as "Commander Zero" during the Sandinista rebellion, has been forced to sell two small aircraft, about 20 vehicles and guerrilla radio equipment to raise money for food and supplies, Rivera said. Costa Rican officials have cut off Rivera's office telephone because he is unable to pay the bill.

Robelo has retained leadership of the main Revolutionary Democratic Alliance, or Arde by its Spanish initials. But his quarrel with Pastora and Rivera has turned Arde into an army without troops, since the charismatic Pastora commanded the loyalty of most Arde forces in the field.

Robelo's rump Arde group is seeking to rebuild a new force under Fernando (Negro) Chamorro as military commander. Guerrilla sources said Chamorro has begun training several dozen men—some new recruits and others lured from Pastora's ranks—on farms in northern Costa Rica.

Chamorro heads the small Nicaraguan Armed Revolutionary Forces, one of Arde's four groups before the split. He has neither Pastora's experience nor fame but Robelo voiced confidence in his ability to form new troops.

Robelo, in an interview here, said his group also is supplying some of Pastora's men in Nicaragua with food in an effort to draw them over. Rivera said field commanders still retain loyalty to both Pastora and himself but will risk shifting to Robelo's faction if that becomes the only way to continue fighting against Sandinista rule in Nicaragua.

"We have to decide in the next several months," he added.

The disintegration of Arde grew from Pastora's refusal to go along with a coordination agreement with the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, FDN by its Spanish initials. In the field, it was speeded by a large-scale sweep last June by the Sandinista Army along the thinly inhabited border area where Arde had its camps.

The accord, signed July 24 in Panama by Robelo and FDN leader Adolfo Calero, is designed eventually to lead to unity between the two main groups fighting Sandinista rule.

Pastora objected that the agreement was pushed by the CIA to streamline control over its harassment campaign against the Sandinistas. He refused to join with the FDN because, he said, it takes orders from CIA advisers and embraces former officers who fought in the National Guard under the late Anastasio Somoza before the Sandinista revolt overthrew him in 1979.

The impulsive and strong-willed Pastora apparently has recovered from injuries suffered in a May 30 bomb blast aimed at assassinating him. He has been lying low, reportedly in a Costa Rican refuge, after declaring that his troops would cease fighting as part of his effort to lend support to a presidential campaign, now aborted, by exile Arturo Cruz to generate pressure on the Sandinistas for peaceful political accommodation. Pastora plans a trip to Europe in coming weeks to renew pleas for funds for his troops.

Robelo's Arde wing, meanwhile, has received a small infusion of money from sources he declined to reveal. The bulk of previous funding, which Robelo said was CIA money moving through a half-dozen laundering organizations in Europe and Latin America, has stopped coming since Congress refused to appropriate additional funds for anti-Sandinista operations.

With agreement to join forces with the FDN, however, Robelo can look forward to renewed U.S. financing if the CIA obtains new funds for the fiscal year beginning in October. The agency received \$24 million this year but, according to officials in Washington, spent its allocation by late spring.

Most of the money went to the FDN, which fields more than 8,000 men and has been a significantly greater military threat to the Sandinistas than Pastora's undersupplied forces headquartered in Costa Rica. Pastora, who complained frequently of lack of funds and announced a halt in his operations at least twice over the last year, nevertheless resisted coordination with the FDN in an attempt to remain independent and free of the stigma of association with former National Guard officers.